DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 095 RC 020 996

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TITLE A Unified Educational System for the Twenty-First Century: Preservice Preparation of Teachers To Meet the Educational Needs of All Students.
PUB DATE Mar 97
NOTE 10p.; In: Promoting Progress in Times of Change: Rural Communities Leading the Way; see RC 020 986.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; Educational Legislation; Educational Needs; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Inclusive Schools; Interdisciplinary Approach; Mainstreaming; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Regular and Special Education Relationship; Special Education; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Collaboration

ABSTRACT

Federal law requiring the least restrictive environment (LRE) for disabled students has resulted in the mainstreaming of disabled students and more recently, in the practice of inclusion. Although LRE has increased the number of disabled students in the general education classroom, the dual system of general and special education continues to exist. The Regular Education Initiative calls for regular and special education professionals to work together to assess the educational needs of students with learning problems and to cooperatively develop educational strategies for meeting those needs. Although a research review indicates that teachers support inclusion and express a willingness to teach disabled students in regular classroom settings, little has been done to prepare teachers for implementing a unified educational system. This paper suggests that teacher education programs should provide intensive training and experience to develop the necessary skills for regular and special education teachers to be effective collaborators in planning, teaching, and evaluating instruction. Priority should be given to developing and implementing noncategorical programs that merge the training of general, special, and related services personnel (speech language pathologists, physical therapists, psychologists) so that they share common course work and practicum experiences. In addition, inservice for local school personnel, community members, and students must focus on developing and practicing collaborative planning, teaching, and evaluation skills with the goal of effective education for all children. This paper also reports on a survey of 49 colleges and universities that indicates that preservice teacher education programs are not addressing the need for a unified educational system. (LP)

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A UNIFIED EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: PRESERVICE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

The dual systems of general education and special education have coexisted since the ratification of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 at both the preservice and school levels. At the preservice level, future educators from general and special education are trained with little or no interaction between groups of students and respective faculties of general and special education. At the school level, services for students with disabilities have typically been given in segregated classrooms or schools removed from the general education classroom.

Students with disabilities are entitled to the least restrictive environment (LRE). Every state agency must insure that each public agency (school district) establishes and implements procedures that provide for the least restrictive environment for each student. Least restrictive environment is the education of students with disabilities, including students in public or private institutions, with students without disabilities to the greatest extent possible. The second requirement of LRE states that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of students with disabilities from the general education environment, occurs only when the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in the general education classroom cannot be achieved satisfactorily [34 CFR §300.550; 20 USC § 1412 (5)(B)]. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EHA or P.L. 94-142) is the federal law passed in 1975 which regulates special education It also defined special education and the exceptionalities recognized by the federal government. P.L. 94-142 was reauthorized in 1990 and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). At that time, the provision of equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities was identified as a protected civil right (Mayhew, 1994; Powers, 1992; Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 1995).

For over 30 years, schools have been practicing mainstreaming, or the practice of placing students with disabilities in general education classrooms as opposed to special segregated classrooms or settings, in the public schools. More recently, the term inclusion has been used in education. Mainstreaming differs from inclusion in that mainstreaming does not necessarily include a trained special education teacher in the room while the provisions of LRE can include services in a general education environment. Recently, LRE has been used as the justification for inclusion. Inclusion was defined in Sacramento City Unified School District v Rachel Holland as "the child with a disability is a full member of a regular education class with no additional assignment to any special class...however, the child need not be in the classroom 100% of the time" (As cited in Evans, 1996, p 2).

Mainstreaming has not been practiced consistently in all parts of the country. The requirement of least restrictive environment has resulted in an increase in the number of students with disabilities whose education is provided in the general education classroom for some or all of the educational day. However, the dual systems of general and special education still continue. Many individuals and organizations have called for the reevaluation of special education to address this dual educational system history (Mayhew, 1994; Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 1995; Will, 1986).

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Madeline Will, the former Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, called for the "shared responsibility" for the education of students with disabilities by general and special education. Secretary Will believed their should be an educational partnership between general and special education, as opposed to a consolidation of the two fields. Will's shared responsibility soon became known as the Regular Education Initiative (REI). Will stated that the dual systems should "cooperatively assess the educational needs of students with learning problems and...cooperatively develop effective educational strategies for meeting those needs (Will, 1986, 415).

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reviewed research and articles related to teacher perceptions of inclusion and mainstreaming for the period of 1958 through 1995. The databases searched included the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) (1966-1995), Psychological Abstracts (1988-1995), Current Index to Journals in Education (1985-1995, and Exceptional Child Education Resources (1985-1995). The reference lists from books determined by the researchers to be relevant to topic, literature reviews, and all identified relevant reports were also searched for additional references. In addition, the major special education journals were hand searched for reports that provided original data on teacher attitudes toward including students with disabilities in their general education classrooms. For the study, articles or reports in the special education journal had to include data on the percent that agreed to specific items related to teacher attitudes or how such data could be reasonably estimated. Overall, Scruggs and Mastropieri found that most teachers (65.0%) indicated support for the concept of inclusion. A slightly lower percentage (53.4%) expressed a willingness to teach students with disabilities. When asked if students benefit from inclusion, most teachers (54.4%) agreed that students with or without disabilities could benefit from the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This is in contrast with a minority of teachers (30.3%) who believed that students with disabilities could be disruptive to the general education classroom. Also, few teachers (27.7%) believed they had sufficient time to undertake inclusion with one study indicating a majority of teachers (87.2%) expressing that they would prefer 1 hour of daily planning time for mainstreaming students with disabilities. Concomitantly, few respondents (29.2%) believed that teachers had sufficient expertise or training for mainstreaming.

Belcher (1995) surveyed the attitudes of professionals in attendance at a presentation on inclusive education at New Mexico's Council for Exceptional Children in Albuquerque. The results indicated that while the majority supported inclusive educational settings, a small percentage (7-15%) were consistently nonsupportive on all items. There was considerable disagreement on the nine items related to; a) least restrictive environment, b) Labeling diminishing student self worth, c) inclusion of students with learning disabilities who have spatial and time orientation problems outside of a resource room, d) preservation of financial resources for students with mild disabilities if they are placed in general education classrooms, e) effectiveness of additional training and consultative support for general education staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the classroom without a resource room, f) the inappropriate use of the label learning disabled, g) identification of students with disabilities as a discriminatory practice, and h) receptiveness of general education teachers for consultative visits by special education staff.

Taylor, Richards, Goldstein, and Schilit (1997) surveyed the perceptions of graduate and undergraduate special and general education students regarding their opinions of the Regular Education Initiative (R.E.I.). The general and special

educators agreed in principal with the philosophy of the R.E.I. The group also agreed that changes needed to be made in the curriculum and instructional methodologies used in the classroom to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This is in direct opposition to the principle of the R.E.I. which states that students with disabilities can be effectively educated in the general education classroom using the same curriculum and instructional methodologies. The general educators believed that students with intellectual impairments or behavioral or emotional disabilities should not be placed in the general education classroom. However, the special educators believed that these students should be placed in the general-education classroom with both special education and general education teachers present in the room.

Stainback and Stainback (1989) proposed action at the college or university level for the merger of personnel preparation programs currently segregated in regular and special education. First, the faculty of the special education and regular education departments must analyze the curricula and emerging demands on educators. The emerging demands would include such items as proficiency in the use of technology and collaborative teaming. Following the analysis, the faculty cadre must determine the core values, knowledge, and skills all teachers need to acquire. Second, through this process, the faculty will likely discover needs in the current curriculum and the need for new courses. Finally, the faculty cadre must determine the courses to add to the program to address the needs identified in the analysis of emerging demands and the identified core values, knowledge, and skills all teachers need.

Stainback and Stainback (1989) recommended a course core set of courses as the basis for all education majors. Each student would complete courses in: a) historical and philosophical foundations of education; b) child and adolescent development; c) human relationships and sensitivity to human difference; d) classroom organization, management, and motivational strategies; e) curriculum design and adaptations; f) educational measurement and authentic assessment; g) peer-mediated strategies (cooperative group learning, peer tutoring, students as peacemakers and mediators of conflict); h) adapting instruction to individual differences; i) use of audiovisual/media/computers/ technology; j) home, school, and community relations; k) issues and trends in education; and l) creativity and collaborative teaming. Each student would also be required to select an area of specialization, such as Reading, Language Arts, Math, etc. The questionnaire will compare the institutions course requirements to the suggested list and determine the areas of agreement and deficiency.

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) is an association of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) comprised of individuals who are administrators of special education programs. CASE's Executive Committee authorized the process which lead to the creation of a drafted statement regarding the future agenda of special education. This process began in October 1991 with the Executive Committee. The original intent of the statement was to determine an agenda for the future of special education. The focus soon changed to the merging of the dual educational systems currently in use of special and regular education.

McLaughlin of the University Maryland Policy Center and Warren of the National Academy on the Principalship in Special Education at Indiana University (as cited in Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1993) determined ten issues related to the future of special education and successful inclusion of students with disabilities in educational settings. The issues identified are: a) stakeholder

responsibility in a community, b) develop a clear vision and mission for education that includes all students, c) establish a system of accountability for all educational programs, d) personnel preparation and certification, e) funding, f) create an organization that supports the mission of restructuring, g) change what schools teach and how they teach it, h) creation of supports for staff development and staff renewal, i) integrated community services for students with disabilities and families, and j) educational technology. Based on and in conjunction with the work of McLaughlin and Warren, the CASE Research Committee produced a draft statement.

The statement developed by the Executive Committee of CASE consisted of a list of five policy and five action recommendations related to the ten issues identified by McLaughlin and Warren. The Executive Committee of CASE's statement advocated the creation of a unified educational system "to ensure quality, inclusive education for all students" and that "all educators are prepared to educate all students" (1993, p 2).

The issues as identified by McLaughlin and Warren in conjunction with work from the National Academy on the Principalship in Special Education at Indiana University with the policy and action recommendations formulated by the CASE Executive Committee gives a clearer direction for schools to implement unified educational systems. The fourth issue and policy recommendation, personnel preparation and certification to educate all students, was the primary focus of this research project with policy and action recommendations 1, 3, 8, and 10 being related to the research topic of preservice preparation of teachers to meet the educational needs of all students.

Vilia, Thousand, and Chapple (1996) identified four institutions of higher education that have responded to Stainback and Stainback (1989) and created new and innovative training programs. The institution's programs model community and faculty collaboration and have departed from the traditional methods of teacher preparation. The resulting action is the merging of the expertise and knowledge of formerly segregated higher education and school-based education. The institutions include: a) Trinity College, Burlington, Vermont; b) Syracuse University, New York; c) the University of California at San Marco; and d) Arizona State University - West, Phoenix. The work of Villa, Thousand, and Chapple and their identification of these four institutions of higher education will be continued in the study of four year colleges and universities to identify those that offer teacher preparation for unified heterogeneous schools.

Villa, Thousand, and Chapple (1996) discuss the current division of teacher preparation programs into separate, distinct, and categorical programs of general education and special education. Special education is then further divided into the various subcategories of learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, severe disabilities, English as a second language, gifted and talented, and other divisions based on a specific disability. This division and subdivision causes educators-in-preparation to neither have the knowledge nor the expectation to create heterogeneous learning experiences for students of differing abilities. The graduates of teacher preparation programs are prepared to teach one group. Villa, Thousand, and Chapple pose the question, "Is it any wonder that general and special education evolved as separate systems? (p 43)"

The situation is further complicated by the low number of teacher preparation programs that model the act of adults collaborating across areas of expertise. Villa, Thousand, and Chapple point out that the act of collaboration is the most important skill teachers need to survive in a profession where no one could possibly meet the

needs of all the children assigned to them (Mayhew, 1994; Salisbury, Evans, & Palombaro, 1997; Villa, Thousand, & Chapple, 1996). Sarason, Levine, Goldenberg, Cherlin, and Bennett (as cited in Villa, Thousand, & Chapple, 1996) described teaching as the "lonely profession." Villa, Thousand, and Chapple state that it can no longer be a lonely profession.

With the separated systems of teacher preparation of general and special education, graduates are not adequately prepared. Trainees are not provided with the intensive training and experience to develop the necessary skills to be effective collaborators in planning, teaching, and evaluating instruction. To mediate the situation, Villa, Thousand, and Chapple suggest that programs preparing general and special education teachers should place the emphasis on theory, practice, and experience in collaborative planning, teaching, and problem-solving techniques. The priority should be given to developing and implementing non-categorical programs that merge training programs so that general, special, and related service personnel (speech language pathologists, physical therapists, psychologists, etc.) share common course work and practicum experiences. Inservice for local school personnel, community members, and students must focus on acquiring and practicing collaborative planning, teaching, and evaluation skills with the goal of effective education for all children.

Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) identified 8 assumptions of heterogeneous schooling. First, in the framework of a zero reject educational placement, all children belong in general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools. The second assumption is that the needs of all students can be met in general education with technical assistance, team teaching, administrative support, and collaboration with all shareholders (parents, students, related service personnel, educators, and community members). Third, in heterogeneous schooling, general and special educators are coequal partners, and share responsibility for the education of all children in their schools. Fourth, both general and special educators acquire new skills through collaboration, training, and experience with children who present challenges. Fifth, all shareholders benefit from heterogeneous educational practices. Sixth, schools must be restructured to facilitate role redefinition and to make it acceptable for students to have individual academic and social needs. Seventh, within schools, the body of decision makers must be expanded to include teachers, students, and community members. Eighth and finally, due to successful experiences, attitudes change over time.

With the possibility of a move to a unified educational system, as defined by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) in association with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the need for teachers prepared to meet the educational needs of regular and special education students is increased. To be prepared to meet the education needs of regular and special education students, teachers need to be adequately trained in the areas related to special education.

The "Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for all Beginning Special Education Teachers" (Council for Exceptional Children, 1995, 12) consists of eight statements and accompanying areas of knowledge and skills. The eight statements of common core knowledge and skills to be represented in course work are: a) philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education; b) characteristics of learners; c) assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation; d) instructional content and practice; e) planning and managing the teaching and learning environment; f) managing student behavior and social interaction skills; g) communication and collaborative partnerships; and h) professional and ethical

practices. The eight common core of knowledge and skills will be included on the questionnaire in the initial section for preservice programs for unified heterogeneous educational systems. In addition, the blending of the common core of knowledge and skills with the course work identified by Stainback and Stainback will formulate the 30 course titles for comparison with the requirements and offered course listings of each institution.

The Specialty Areas Studies Board of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) approved the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) guidelines for preparing special education professionals on October 15, 1996. This action will require the 40 states that have partnerships with NCATE to align their state standards for special education professional preparation with CEC's guidelines for preparing special education professionals. Some of the affected states will require colleges and universities to submit their special education preparation programs to CEC for approval to retain state accreditation. In states without a partnership agreement with NCATE, any college or university seeking NCATE accreditation must first submit their special education programs to CEC for approval by demonstrating they meet the standards (Council for Exceptional Children, 1996).

The need for teachers to be prepared for a unified heterogeneous educational system leads to the formation of a research hypothesis. For the study, the research hypothesis is as follows. For the population of colleges and universities in the United States of America in the sample that offer degrees leading to certification in general education and special education, how many offer course work that prepares teachers for a unified heterogeneous educational system?

A random survey of teacher preservice programs throughout the United States was conducted to determine which programs are preparing future teachers for a unified heterogeneous educational system of education (n=49). The institutions selected were from the colleges and universities listed in either Lovejoys College Guide (Straughn & Straughn, 1995), The College Blue Book (Author, 1993) or Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges (Author, 1996) and which were listed as offering both regular and special education degrees. The sample (n=49) included institutions in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Two states, Alaska and Hawaii, did not have institutions listed that offered both general and special education majors in the three college guides used. The institutions were surveyed utilizing a document review of published college catalogs for the 1996-1997 academic year. The course titles included on the instrument were derived from the 12 core courses from Stainback and Stainback (1989) and the common core of knowledge and skills identified by CEC (1995).

The questions on the document review included an indication of which courses listed, as defined by Stainback and Stainback (1989) and the Council for Exceptional Children (1995) are required by the college/university for graduation. The percentages of colleges and universities in the sample which required and/or offered the courses was greatest for those courses in general education. One pair of courses, "Peer-Mediated Strategies (cooperative group learning, peer tutoring, students as peacemakers and mediators of conflict) in General Education" and "Peer-Mediated Strategies in Special Education," had the lowest percentages with 4% of the institutions offered and 0% required the course in general education and 2% offered and required the course in special education. The majority of the institutions that required a course specifically related to special education populations required the course of special education majors but not those in general education. Some of the colleges and universities in the sample listed one required course for graduation that

addressed both areas of general and special education populations. Other institutions required one course for general education and another course for special education majors exclusively. In response to the research hypothesis, "For the population of colleges and universities in the United States of America in the sample that offer degrees leading to certification in general education and special education, how many offer course work that prepares teachers for a unified heterogeneous educational system?," none of the colleges or universities offered all the courses identified in the questionnaire. The majority of institutions offered more than half of the classes. Therefore, for the majority of the institutions, the addition of courses or the restructuring of existing courses to include issues related to students with disabilities would make these programs reflect the total public school population. The resulting change would yield a teacher preservice preparation program that prepares teachers for a unified heterogeneous education system.

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